

# MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church & Society

## REPORT

#39, September-October 1981

### Focus on Discipleship Motives in Career Choices

by Edith Krause

#### Introduction

This issue of the *Report* deals with choosing careers within the framework of being Christian women. By "choosing careers" we mean not only deciding which line of work best suits us, but also how to integrate our work with other aspects of our lives, including our relationship with God.

I talked with women about this issue of *Report*, and some responded, "Oh, that's nothing to do with me—I don't have a career." Although none of the articles in this issue deal specifically with homemaking as a career, considering the amount of time and the number of skills involved in homemaking, it can hardly be thought of as a "non-career." Thinking of homemaking as a career has some benefits: First of all, this legitimizes homemaking as a respectable occupation for a woman (or man) to be doing fulltime. Today, the truly liberated woman is seen as one who can hold down a successful job as well as take care of a family and home, and this places a lot of pressure and a certain amount of judgment on the person who enjoys homemaking as a fulltime occupation. Another benefit is that, as part of a career, the skills needed to be a homemaker are taken more seriously. Not only does this emphasize the contribution a non-salaried wife makes to a couple's financial state, it also implies that some amount of talent and preparation is needed to be a good homemaker. Being a good housewife and mother don't necessarily go along with the territory of being a woman; recognizing that the skills involved in homemaking are not trivial relieves some pressure from those of us who feel inferior as women because our cooking isn't the greatest and you can't eat off our floors. It also gives credit where credit is due. One woman I know illustrates this well. She was never particularly ambitious in school, and dropped out early to get married. I think that as a wife and mother she really found her niche in life. She loves to cook and housekeep, and takes great pride in it. She also loves kids, and is probably one of the most loving and effective people I know when it comes to disciplining small children. This woman is truly a gifted home-

maker, and my respect and admiration for her have grown in recognizing this.

Aside from homemaking as a career, the concept of choosing careers is important to women who are homemakers since not all will always be fulltime homemakers. Many women will feel the need to expand their horizons once the kids are grown, and will need to consider their options. Also, to be realistic, not all marriages last forever, and it is important to be prepared, emotionally at the very least, to step out of the homemaking role and into a paying, professional one.

This issue of *Report* will seem most relevant to women in the process of making career choices, either young women who are just finishing or still in school, or women interested in trying something else.

Although there is still opposition to accepting women into some fields of work, most fields are available for women to pursue. In spite of this, many women seem to be reluctant to step out of traditional roles. In a recent poll of thirty-three young women at two local Christian post-secondary institutions, 69% of those who had chosen or were seriously considering a particular vocation had chosen ones that have traditionally been occupied by women. Seventy percent knew women in the occupations they had chosen, and 78% of these admitted that this had influenced their decision. It seems reasonable to speculate that perhaps part of the reason so few women venture outside traditional occupations is because they have few if any models. When women do choose to go into non-traditional occupational fields, they are often on their own, without any female mentors to offer advice. (See Summary of Questionnaires, following.)

Marriage restricts the options women have. Many of the vocations not traditionally occupied by women require extensive study and/or travel, and since married women's careers (other than homemaking) are often considered to be peripheral by the women themselves as well as by others, many married women are not willing to invest the time required to pursue such careers. Indeed, for married women to be able to

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*The MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society (formed in 1973) believes that Christ Jesus teaches equality of all persons. It strives to promote this belief through sharing information, concerns, and ideas relating to problems and issues which affect the status of women in church and society.*

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## Summary of Questionnaires

(Edith Krause, compiler of this *Report's* feature material, conducted a survey for an ingathering of opinions.)

Out of thirty-three respondents (at two Christian post-secondary institutions) fifteen (45%) have chosen a career. Of these, twenty-two (69%) chose traditional—for women—careers, and ten (30%) chose non-traditional careers.

How many had models? Twenty-three (70%) knew people in the occupation of their choice. Of these, eighteen (78%) said this had influenced their decision.

Twenty-seven (82%) said ministry was an important factor of the career. Thirty-one (94%) said personal fulfillment was important.

*Introduction, continued*

integrate outside careers with family life, some co-operation on the part of their husbands and families is needed, and some changes need to be made in our attitudes about roles. As Margaret Mead puts it:

"Some men are more interested in human relations that they are in public achievement. Some men would much rather manage a house and children than go to the office every day. There are some women who are just no good at all at houses and children. If we had a notion of every possible combination—man older, woman older, man goes out to work, both of them go out to work halftime, one of them works one year and the other works the next year—then no one pattern would be regarded as peculiar. We would remark on them in the way we say: 'These people go to Europe every year,' and 'Those people never go to the country in the summer.' they would just be interesting differences."

<sup>1</sup>(By the way, "two-career marriages" is being considered as a future topic for the *Report*.)

Another aspect of choosing a career deals with assessing yourself. Past performance records and insights of friends can be helpful as well as restrictive. Most universities and colleges have student counselling services offering a variety of tests designed to help assess interests and aptitudes, and often these will suggest options not even thought of before.

Women also need to assess their expectations of their careers. Ninety-four percent of the women polled expected their careers to bring them personal fulfillment. Judging from my own work experience, and from speaking with others, it is apparent that we need many sources from which to receive personal satisfaction, since the rewards our jobs offer may not always be adequate. In terms of our careers, we may need to reassess what our rewards are. In the case of financial rewards, that is fairly obvious, but in the case of "fulfillment" rewards, some of us may have to develop rather low satisfaction thresholds to cope with our work.

Lastly, and most importantly, is the issue of discipleship. Ultimately our satisfaction and fulfillment in our work relate to our feelings of how faithful we have been in using our God-given talents. Discipleship obviously isn't restricted to specifically ministerial work, but encompasses our entire lifestyle. Every vocation provides opportunities to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ whether in terms of how we relate to other

In their expectations for the future, twenty-eight (85%) anticipated marriage; twenty-two (67%) mentioned children; twenty-four (73%) expected to continue a career; twenty-three (70%) anticipated a switch in career.

Only three (9%) said they were interested in direct Christian service, and all three of these were interested in missions.

Nine people (27%) thought it was all right for a woman to be a pastor. Twenty-seven (82%) thought it was all right for a woman to be a politician. Thirty (90%) thought it was all right for a woman to be a corporate executive.

people, how we relate to God's creation, or how we use our own God-given creativity to reflect that Gospel. I have found helpful the following excerpts of letters written by C.S. Lewis:

"I think there is a great deal to be said for having one's deepest spiritual interest distinct from one's ordinary duty as a student or professional man. St. Paul's job was tent-making. When the two coincide I should have thought there was a danger lest the natural interest in one's job and the pleasures of gratified ambition might be mistaken for spiritual progress and spiritual consolation; and I think clergymen sometimes fall into this trap. Contrariwise, there is the danger that what is boring and repellent in the job may alienate one from the spiritual life. And finally, someone has said 'None are so unholy as those whose hands are cauterised with holy things'; sacred things may become profane by becoming matters of the job....Look the question is not whether we should bring God into our work or not. We certainly should and must: as MacDonald says 'All that is not God is death.' The question is whether we should simply (a) Bring God in in the dedication of our work to God, in the integrity, diligence, and humility with which we do it or also (b) Make God's professed and explicit service our job. The A vocation rests on all people whether they know it or not; the B vocation only on those who are specially called to it. Each vocation has its peculiar dangers and peculiar rewards."<sup>1</sup>

The articles that follow attempt to offer some information on choosing careers and living with them, as well as to provide some models and encouragement for women in the career process. Many of the articles grew out of "brainstorming" sessions with the women from my own home church, Langley Mennonite Fellowship.

<sup>1</sup>Sheehy, Gail, *Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life* (Bantam Books, Inc., 1977) pp. 346-347. (Several chapters of this book are relevant to this topic and provide useful and interesting information.)

<sup>2</sup>Vanauken, Sheldon, *A Severe Mercy* (Bantam Books, Inc., 1977) pp. 102-103.

## Discipleship and Career Choices

by Linda Kroeker

"How did you get to where you are now?" This question, or variations of it, is sometimes put to me when people find out what I'm doing and where I've been. My response usually takes one of two directions: I may recite the bare facts: how I studied at Grace College of the Bible, became interested in missions, earned my BA, worked in a hospital, took an eight-month missionary internship course, went back to school, earned my BS in nursing at Wichita State University, applied to Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services, was sent to Belgium and Zaire on a Christian Service assignment, and returned to Zaire on another three-year assignment. Or I can talk about discipleship.

Much of my understanding of how discipleship has related to past choices has come in retrospect. That is, at the time of making those decisions, my perception of discipleship was vague and undeveloped. I felt I was making the right choices and going in the right directions, but would have been unable to clearly articulate why. My thinking on discipleship has gradually crystallized and become fuller, so that, while I am still learning, I now can better see how my choices related to discipleship.

And what is discipleship? A large part of it is responding to God: recognizing that God has given me life not so I can squander it on myself, but rather so I may live it for God. One of my first sincere responses to God came in high school, when a speaker at a youth banquet challenged us to live revolutionary lives for God. I stood at the close of the meeting, not because all my friends did (none of them stood anyway), but because I was startled and moved to think that God could be interested in and use an average teen-age girl with no particular talent or strength of personality. I can no longer remember how or why I chose to go to Bible college, but a few years later, I was there. It was during my first year there that I again was confronted with a need to respond to God on a major issue. At the annual missionary conference, before the opening meeting, the college president asked any student who felt God was calling him or her to serve in missions to stand. The next thing I knew, I was standing. Up to that point, I'd never considered missions. This was at the start of the missionary conference—we'd had no emotional appeals to go and serve the Lord in far-off places. I'd heard no voices, seen no visions. But I had, once again, made a legitimate and sincere response to God, a response that God used to guide me and bring me back when, several years later, I was making the wrong choices and squandering my life on myself. When I stood up that Monday morning at the start of missionary conference, a lot of people no doubt said, "Her? a missionary?" During my first missions courses, I often thought, "How can God possibly want me? I don't qualify spiritually, academically, socially...my daily devotions are a washout, I'm an introvert; I have mediocre grades...." Yet, I had made a decision. I had responded to God. And I've never had any inclination to take back that response.

The decision to go into nursing was also a response to

God. During the time I was in missionary internship, I was profoundly touched by news reports of physical suffering in many parts of the world. At the same time, I was much disturbed by Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25:31-46. I had earlier considered a nursing career for reasons of financial and professional security, but recognized that my commitment to follow God had nothing to do with such a motivation. Now I saw that through caring for people's physical needs, I would be caring for and serving and giving to Jesus.

So, after three years of university, here I was: Linda Kroeker, RN, ready to serve God in Asia, or the Middle East, maybe even South America. But not Africa: never Africa. Then God asked me, through the mission board, if I loved God enough to follow Him to Zaire. I finally said yes, and went. Then, throughout two years and eight months of my three year assignment, I told God not to ask me to return to Zaire once I'd left, because I'd have to say no this time. It wasn't until I was willing to work longer in Zaire that God definitely presented me with the opportunity.

This has been a picture of discipleship as it relates to the major decisions in life. Behind all of this, however, discipleship is a much more complex and daily affair. Discipleship is who I am, not just what I do and where I go. Discipleship means my identity is rooted in Jesus Christ, not in my profession, my marital status, my material possessions, nationality or ethnic background, family relationships, church activities, etc. (this, to me, is what Luke 14:26,27 is about). Discipleship means that I choose to cooperate with God as He reproduces Jesus' life in mine.

As I intimated earlier, I came to discipleship in a sort of backward way. The first major choices I was making didn't seem to reflect much of what my daily life was all about. As I have grown more responsive to God in daily affairs, those major issues are becoming more and more a natural result of following Jesus in all the little, everyday things.

*Linda Kroeker, R.N., is in Zaire serving a second term with the Mennonite Brethren Mission Board.*

*And what is discipleship?*

*A large part of it is responding to God.*

## Women's Experience of Work

by Alice Klassen

This issue is about women and work, and deals with our motivation and decision-making in this area. In thinking about work we sometimes get caught in the bind of viewing it as an either/or matter; women either work or stay at home. A look at the reality of women's activities gives us a clearer perspective on the place of work in our lives. Some facts about work are that: we women contribute economically to the home whether or not we are in the labor force; we are seeking paid employment outside the home in increasing numbers; and although we are better educated than men, we receive less pay.

Women have traditionally contributed to the economic situation of the family. Economists have frequently documented how expensive it would be to buy all the services that many women provide in their homes: cooking, canning, and sewing in the home, working alongside other family members in the family farm or business, or employment outside the home.

Some women may never spend full time caring for children at home; others may never enter the labor force, contributing to the family in a variety of other ways. However, paid employment outside the home is increasingly a part of women's lives.

According to one source citing information from Labour Canada, the average married woman with children spends seven years full time at home and thirty-four years working out of the home. Women who do not marry or have children will spend longer working outside of the home.

Women's participation in the labor force has risen steadily since 1920 when it was less than 20 percent. Today almost half of all women over 15 are either employed outside the home or looking for work.

Women are employed mainly in occupations where the majority of workers are women, "female occupations" such as clerical and service occupations, teaching, and nursing. Women who work full time earn between 50 and 60 percent of what male full time workers earn. Their income disparity is despite the fact that more women than men complete high school and post high school training. According to 1978 statistics provided by Employment and Immigration Canada, 87 percent of women workers have some secondary school education or higher whereas the percentage for men is 79.

Women work both in and out of the home. We work under certain handicaps. At home our work is not fully recognized by society and in the labor force we tend to be in certain traditional occupations and work for less pay than men similarly qualified. By examining the place of work in our lives we can see that it is not a peripheral issue for women, and we can become more prepared to deal with it.

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*Alice is a fulltime social worker. She is married and has two sons, Peter age 10 and Nicholas age 6.*

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## Sharing Family Economics and Parenting

Exploring some of the feelings, reasons, decisions which three couples experienced in the process.

by Ute Regier

Several months ago, when we three couples sat down after supper one evening and began to ask one another questions and share ideas about their experiences with shared responsibility, it soon became apparent what a good thing it was. Over several cups of coffee and much sharing through laughter and quiet, serious moments, we learned of one another's journeys—the joys and achievements as well as the struggles and pain. There were similarities and differences, but as we got to know each other better, we affirmed one another and felt encouraged; the processes our families were in were truly worthwhile.

One family's decision to have the woman also be responsible for family income came about during school years. The husband was in graduate school and responsibility for income needed to be shared. For another couple, the husband's job took him away from home during the week; he could stay home and work on the farm and be at home with the family, where all wished him to be, but his wife would need to supplement the family account. In the third instance, the

process was more gradual. Initially the woman went into teaching because of her interest and need for stimulation. After a couple of years and much discussion it became obvious that a shared arrangement allowed the husband to pursue a professional music career, the wife to teach as she liked to do, and still leave time for home and family.

Although each family's situation was unique, there were some common aspects in all our pilgrimages. For the males, all three needed to learn about their new roles—the routines involved in housekeeping, taking responsibility for the children (enrolling them in school, doctors appointments, sitters, bedtimes). One husband mentioned that his ideas about cooking changed. Two of the men told of how sharing the economic responsibility challenged their egos—they needed to let go of the image that they had to be the provider. One shared how, at first, he was jealous that his spouse was recognized for her ability: "I had to let

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## Directions and Redirections

by Eleanor M. Loewen

Often Christians do not consult God when making important decisions, and then they blame God when plans go wrong. When you talk to God, don't just say what you want and "hang up."<sup>1</sup> God can direct in ways not traveled before.

Trends of a generation ago don't necessarily hold today. For example, this past year, for the first time in history, the number of women in college outnumbered men. The number of single persons is up to one-third of the population. Persons are waiting longer before getting married, and more married women have several careers—an average of our (homemaking being one career). Redirections must be considered throughout life. Following is a discussion of redirection in career planning goals; its intent is to help women have a positive attitude to redirection.

First, it is important to define what is meant by "career." A career is the totality of work one does in a lifetime. It includes the vocational and avocational

### Sharing, continued

you walk beside me. In my career I had to slow down and couldn't walk quite as fast, because spending more time at home and taking more responsibility for the home left less time and energy for my work outside the home."

Two of the women shared how they also had to "let go"—let the fathers learn to keep the children, to care for some of the home duties. Initially, they had been concerned about their spouse's ego. One woman shared how her attitude changed from being benevolent and coping with the change in responsibilities, to accepting and participating joyously in both the former and new duties. One mother shared how she got a much better perspective on raising her child through the father's more intimate involvement with their child and her outside activities.

There are still issues to cope with. When dealing with others there is sometimes the need to prove that what I do is worthwhile. Or someone must answer the question "Did you know that she has to work?" For one couple their choice meant that they were unable to pursue adoption of a child at this time.

For all three families it is a process. Each individual member is learning and changing, letting go and accepting new challenges.

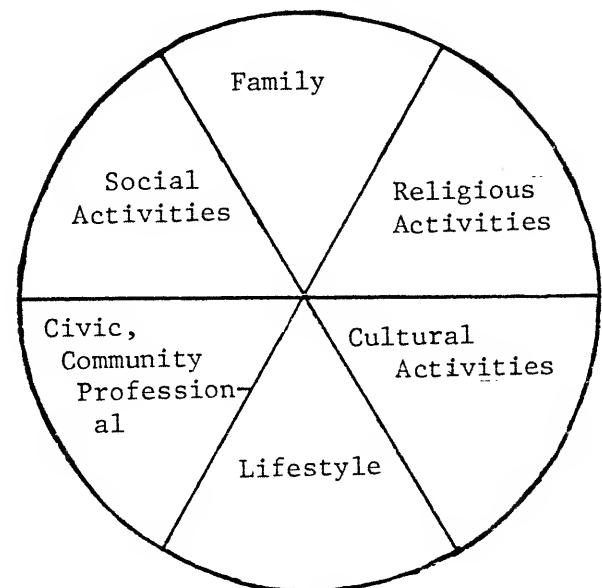
For all of us, the experience is one of a greater and much broader responsibility to the family. While for some it began as an economic rearrangement, it soon became a clear family decision. It was another way of looking at ourselves as God's people, where both adults are fulfilling a calling, and where for each spouse there is a multi-emphasis of family, career, and income.

*Ute Regier works part time as an elementary school teacher, specializing in working with gifted children. She is married and has a five year old daughter.*

aspects. It is more than a specific job. It is a *whole* way of living.

John Zehring considers ministry as not so much a vocation as an attitude. This attitude determines ability to deal with and interpret career redirections. The attitude makes the difference. Either one can be threatened by career redirections, or one can learn to manage them. "I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me" (Phil. 4:13, TEV). How one faces redirection says a lot to other people about one's Christianity.

As was mentioned earlier, careers involve a whole way of living. Therefore, career planning encompasses a variety of areas. One way of looking at the components of life or career is illustrated by the following diagram.



I will consider each area separately. It would be presumptuous of me to say "this or that must be done" in each area; each of you is different, has different needs, is at a different stage, and has to consider different variables when setting goals. But some comments can be helpful in setting career goals.

1. *Religious Activities* Persons need to consider the type of fellowship which best meets personal needs for spiritual growth. One advantage of changing geographical locations is that a person has the opportunity to "shop around" to determine what type of church fellowship best provides opportunities for Christian growth and service. People who do not move often still need to decide where and how much to get involved in the local church. When considering a new career, consider how that career will affect participation in the church fellowship, or how it will affect your personal spiritual growth and change.

2. *Family* A number of variables enter here. For persons not married, an important decision is whether

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## In All My Years I Never Dreamed—

by Virleen Bailey

Finished with filling in all the blanks on my son Collin's application to the college financial aid office, I sat eyeing the envelope enviously.

"He isn't even sure he wants to go," I thought remembering Collin's footdragging reluctance. For him, life was already full and satisfying, with a job paying well enough to support his car. Collin had yet to venture far enough from the parental doorstep to develop a concern for his future.

But, oh, how his mother ached to go back to college! Time and again along the years of my marriage I glossed over the yearning with "someday" or "when Kathy—or Sean—or Margaret—" is in school, I'll finish earning my degree. Yet I never really believed "someday" would come—it sounded too much like "happily ever after"

### *Directions and Redirections, continued*

or not to marry (remarry), or whether to concentrate on getting established in a career. Just because it seems to be socially and culturally acceptable to marry does not necessarily mean that marriage is in God's plan for you.

Another variable relates to single women particularly: whether or not to seek a career away from the parental home, or even to move into her own apartment/home in the same town. (I recall my father offering me a bedroom suite if I would accept my first teaching position in my home town.)

Other variables include whether or not to have children, blending career and parenting, developing or maintaining relationships to nuclear and extended families. The question is, "How will my family life affect my career, how will my career affect my family life?" We in the church need to seriously discuss the dynamics of blending career and family, especially in mixed groups of single and married persons.

3. *Social Activities* It is easy to develop a social life with a small group of persons in the church, or at the office, and maintain the same social activities over a period of time. Consider breaking out of the routine and deliberately planning social activities that will broaden the set of friends? Does this aspect of your career permit opportunities to witness through social activities? Is there a balance of church and nonchurch social contacts? Is there a balance of single and married persons in your social life?

4. *Cultural Activities* The aesthetics are God's gift of the beautiful in life. In setting career goals, one aspect of life is supporting the arts (music, art, literature) in the church and community. How does/will your career affect participation in community and church cultural events? Are you able to develop your artistic abilities, either vocationally or avocationally?

5. *Civic, Community, and Professional Activities* These areas are not often stressed in our Mennonite churches, yet we can often make contributions, consistent with our Christian values and ideals, in these activities. In fact, isn't it a mandate from Christ that we

and I had stopped crediting fairy tales when I cut my eye teeth.

Twenty odd years earlier, enrolled in a small, state-supported "normal" school (teacher-training at one time was termed "normal training") I had no doubts about my future. Actually, the options were limited. A well-bred young woman could, without suffering damage to either character or status, teach, nurse, or take dictation. Daddy decided that his daughter would teach, and fortunately I not only displayed an aptitude for teaching, but I loved it. In those days of teacher shortages, all the state required for certification was sixty college hours. After gathering them onto my transcript, I left school for the more practical pursuit of earning a living. And when my marriage resulted in a

serve where we live? We have a responsibility to make our local and world communities better places by witnessing. Part of our career is service.

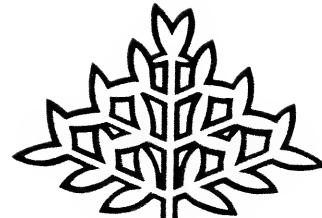
Service in professional organizations is an area of service: bring Christian perspectives and values to that profession. Our calling to a profession includes serving that profession on more than the local level. (This is an area the MCC Task Force might be encouraged to speak to in the future.)

6. *Lifestyle* We have heard a great deal about living a simpler lifestyle, particularly through Doris Janzen Longacre's writings. When considering career planning goals, it is important to consider how that career will affect one's preferred lifestyle. A few variables in the larger question are whether or not to live in an apartment or house, whether to live with or near parents, whether to live alone or with others, and whether to live according to needs or wants. For a detailed discussion of this topic, see James Fairfield's book *All that We Are We Give*.

In conclusion, "career" is more than a job. It involves the whole of living: religious, family, social, cultural, civic community professional activities, and lifestyle. Making a career decision takes time and can be very lonely, but can be made easier by having group support. Each of us is responsible and accountable for realization, development, and use of our individual gifts, abilities, and strengths. Women, no less than men, have this responsibility. A balance of "what you do" and "who you are" in all areas of life provides excellent prospects for a fulfilled life.

<sup>1</sup>Zehring, John W. *Get Your Career in Gear*. (Victor Books, 1976) p. 18.

Eleanor M. Loewen, Ph. D., is on the staff of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, and wrote this when going through a redirection—from studies to employment.



steadily growing family, both college and career had to be folded away.

So now I sat wallowing in my own past, about to sign my name to Collin's future. Clicking the penpoint into place, I wrote on a blank at the bottom of the page—and blinked as the ink dried. "Virleen Bailey" I had written—on the line designated "student." And my name fit!

Time was short for quick decisions, but I managed. The family talked around the idea at supper, and the next day, backed by less than enthusiastic familial approbation, I drove the twenty-five miles to Hillsboro (Kansas) and Tabor College, where warm, encouraging people quickly arranged my next two years.

Intending to finish my degree in elementary education, I discovered that the requirements for certification had greatly changed over the intervening years. Nearly all my old credits stood, but I needed much more science or math, as well as additional professional courses.

Learning is an ongoing process that can be rewarding, or painful, or it can be both. As I walked hesitantly through those first days back in school, I applied the meaning of "learning" specifically to the knowledge I would glean from the courses in which I was enrolled. Classes meeting three days a week left two days for catching up at home. With our younger children in school, the family's period of adjustment was brief and relatively smooth. That, too, was a part of learning, although none of us realized it. Probably we were fortunate in this gradual alignment of our new life style. As my class load increased, and especially with the addition of student teaching to my schedule, my two free days evaporated like July mist.

Every evening was given over to burrowing into the books. The assignments were long and difficult—most of the text books surely were intended for year-long study instead of semester stints. Until I got the hang of knowing where to skim and where to dip in, I had to read every word in order to come up with any understanding. Concentration required absolutely quiet surroundings—a state yet to be attained in the average family circle. I fussed at the children and at my husband. At times, too sleepy to tackle another paragraph, I was ready to write *finis* to the whole business.

And with the coming semester, there was no more postponing the science course required for certification. No math, I decided: genes for math prowess are recessive in my chromosomes. Science loomed nearly as formidably, but I had a choice of sorts: as I had always been a nature nut, I went with botany—didn't I know all the trees and wild flowers growing for miles around? The first class period made rainwater-clear to me that being able to identify a dandelion was like glancing at the title of a book: there remained a great many more words to read! For twenty years my brain had functioned as a master control for the lives of my children and to some extent for my husband. The kind of thinking needed for reading and writing, and belonging to this group and that, had kept my mind viable—barely. I was totally unprepared for the complexities of science as represented by botany!

The professor was aware of my floundering, I thought him cold and utterly lacking in sympathy. Patronizing,

in fact. I could imagine him thinking: Poor old girl, she'll never make it so why doesn't she go back to the kitchen where she belongs! The tone of his voice conveyed his meaning, if the actual words did not. Meiosis and mitosis, DNA and all the rest evaded my grasp, and again I was ready to quit. The restructuring required of my thought processes demanded more than I had to give. I was silly to knock myself out over a job I'd never be able to manage. Regret might come later, but I was attending my last botany class. And the only feeling I could muster was one of sheer relief.

Then God took the matter out of my hands. Of that fact I will never be more sure. The professor directed to me a rather difficult question, and I supplied the correct answer, astonishing him as much as myself. "Elder statesman," he called me, then, and stood there laughing—a Ph.D. not yet dry behind the ears, younger-looking than many of his students—and redirected my life.

I did not drop out. At that moment, I vowed vengeance. I thought that he was mocking me. Well, I would graduate, if only to replace that smug smirk with a look of humble awe!

Digging into botany, I found that I really "dug" it! I finished that course and came back for more! Zoology, ecology, anything and everything to do with nature and the environment!

I graduated with high honors, yet the idea of leaving Tabor was more painful than joyous. My education degree, so long in becoming reality, no longer represented my ultimate goal. I wanted much, much more, and knowing myself to be capable, I determined to earn a graduate degree, and settled for a job at Tabor while I sorted through the options. I enrolled in additional biology courses—Tabor staff were allowed four semester hours tuition-free. Upper level courses. And I tutored freshmen struggling with the biology basics. Once my eyes were opened to the heretofore dark world of science, I found a warm friend in the young professor. Encouraged by him and through his guidance I developed an area of interest that is firming into the core of a beckoning career in scientific writing and research.

With perhaps twenty years remaining to fill as I may, I have been allowed by a gracious God the means for filling them. I do not believe I am exhibiting selfishness but rather a concern for the worth of a self created by God, in God's image, and therefore not to be debased by being left empty and useless. Reviewing these three years, I feel good about what I see. Probably I will never have the whole-souled support of my family, but I have already earned their respect in making the transition from hesitant housewife to confident scholar and fulfilled woman.

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*Virleen Bailey and Max Terman are co-authoring a paper on behavior in herons. Also, she is gathering data for a research project involving *Microtus ochrogaster*.*

## Autobiography: God said, "I Am with You"

by Marlyce J. Friesen

My parents, Peter and Rose Regier Kasper, passed on to me an appreciation for education. They also taught Christian principles by example; their faith was central. Making the Christian faith a personal faith began early for me.

I attended Henderson (Nebraska) Community High School, finding science courses to be the most challenging. At Tabor College I majored in biology and chemistry; several professors (Clarence Harms, S.L. Loewen, Clarence Hiebert, and the late Orlando Wiebe) encouraged me to apply for medical school. My self-confidence was minimal, but gradually became at ease with the idea. Also at Tabor I met Art Friesen who became my good friend, and later my husband.

I decided to attend Kansas University School of Medicine in Kansas City. Academics went smoothly, but it was the first time I had lived outside a Mennonite community and alone in a large city. Art was attending graduate school in Lawrence, Kansas, and we decided to get married the following summer.

Art was accepted into medical school at Washington University in St. Louis. I transferred to St. Louis, and—in addition—we were given scholarships. We looked on this as God's way of saying, "I'm with you in this venture."

The next four years are a blur. After studying long hours day after day, grocery shopping and laundry became our recreation. Academic rigors were great. Medical school became our whole life. Art and I used each other for spiritual support.

One of the major adjustments after we began patient care was realizing that our time was not our own. If a critically-ill patient was admitted we stayed regardless of intentions to meet for dinner. I remember, also, the pain of total physical and mental exhaustion after working thirty-six hours without sleep, twelve hours free, and then thirty-six hours work.

I learned to enjoy looking after patients. Feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction are tremendous when an ill person can improve. One of my favorite examples of the joy of practicing medicine occurred last summer: a person I had looked after ten years before phoned to say hello while holidaying in British Columbia. He had been critically ill with complications after surgery for a kidney stone, and had been so unstable that it was necessary to stay at bedside for hours at a time. Now he said he was enjoying excellent health, and thanked me again for looking after him.

Because Art is Canadian we decided to move to Canada after his graduation and my completion of internship. We moved to Toronto in 1971 to train in internal medicine in Toronto. One of our joys here was our association with the Toronto Mennonite Brethren Church. We had been living in a spiritual vacuum for four years.

During my second year of residency in Toronto, I became pregnant. I did not want the rigors of another year of residency training during the final months of pregnancy and our child's infancy, so I postponed

completing my residency. Because of a debt and low salaries, we then moved to Alliston, Ontario, where Art practiced family medicine. I found staying home to be boring after three days, and began practicing family medicine part time. After our son Jason was born I continued to work part time and found I could enjoy the best of two worlds. It was a treat to eat all our meals together at home.

After a year of practicing family medicine, Art decided to continue his training. Since I needed only one more year to complete my internal medicine residency, we both decided to go back to training. We were both accepted into the residency program at the University of Western Ontario in London.

I found it very difficult to go back to night and weekend work (in addition to five full days a week). Even though we found good daycare for Jason, I still felt uneasy about his well-being. When Jason was ill or his behavior less than optimal, I felt that my absence was somehow responsible. Art's support helped me tremendously. During this final year of residency I studied for and then passed the three-day internal medicine exams.

One of our joys in London was being associated with a house church. The emotional and spiritual support of that Anabaptist-like fellowship was very important to us.

Our second year in London, I worked in research at Victoria Hospital; this taught me patience. A sick person can often be vastly improved in a matter of hours or days; research projects can take months to complete. (I've found this same patience necessary in raising children.)

During our third year in London, I became pregnant again. I found this pregnancy easier because I wasn't working full time. I did have the extra work of looking after an active three-year-old.

Art had always hoped to return to British Columbia, so we were happy to find a cardiology practice at the Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster. We moved to Chilliwack just before our second son Jonathan was born. This was a stressful time: Art was studying for exams, we were adjusting to a new home and new baby. I missed the academic stimulation of my previous work, and we were house-hunting. The day after Art flew east to take his oral exam, six-week old Jonathan was admitted to the hospital with viral pneumonia.

An alleviation of our stress was that this was the first time in our married life that we had lived near any relatives. With joy we watched our boys develop relationships with grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins.

In 1978 we moved to Surrey. Art worked long hours. Because most of my neighbors worked outside the home, I found it hard to make new friends. Art met many people with whom he had grown up, but it took time for me to feel that they were my friends. I found I

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## God and People Opened the Way

by Marilyn Miller

In August 1981 I began my seventh year as co-pastor of Arvada (Colorado) Mennonite Church. As a young girl growing up and thinking about a career, I could think of nothing more meaningful than pastoral work. It also seemed that many of the things I did best were skills pastors needed in their work. However, at that time, I didn't know of one female pastor, so pastoring seemed an impossibility. I decided I would marry a minister and do church work with and through him. But then my "shining knight" came riding up in his new '57 black and white Ford and I fell in love. However, he said that in no way did he feel called to be a pastor. My heart ruled over my head and we married.

It turned out that my husband, Maurice, is one of the most important factors behind my being in the pastorate today. He has encouraged me to be an individual and do the things that are fulfilling and helpful in growing into the person God intends me to be. He has very unselfishly supported me as a person and in my growth and work outside the home.

I took a class in seminary where we were encouraged to make a life plan. We were to write down where we wanted to be five years from now, ten years from now, twenty-five years from now. Then we wrote down steps to take that would help us obtain our goals.

Although that can be helpful, it is not the method I used to get into my present career. Where I am today was very unplanned. I tried to do each day, each week, each month, what I believed God would have me do and doors opened up that I would have never thought

### *Autobiography. continued*

was exclusively presenting my domestic side to people in order to feel accepted. This annoyed me.

For the last two years I have been working part time as the medical director for a New Westminster based cardiac rehabilitation program. I also worked part time in the Renal Dialysis Unit at the Royal Columbian Hospital last winter. Again, I'm enjoying the best of two worlds.

Currently my life is very full. I enjoy being a wife and mother. I garden extensively and preserve and freeze much of our own food. I've been able to explore further areas of interest which were neglected during my eight years of medical training: the piano, books, ice skating. For me these joys more than compensate for not having a full time private practice. Art would be unable to "take up the slack" for me should I begin full-time practice; therefore, we would need a live-in person to look after the children and household. At this point I would rather continue my involvement with our boys. When they are older I may expand my working hours.

Recently we have begun worshiping with the Langley Mennonite Fellowship. This group is helping us grow spiritually and is providing us with friendship.

**Uncloistered Community:** When I was ten years old my eldest brother took off for the quiet, secluded life of the Jesuit seminary. For the next few years our family would take long vacations to visit him. At the ages of 10 and 11 I thought just being on seminary grounds would make me holier. What troubled me was what is called "cloister." In the seminary there were certain places women were not allowed to go. I did not understand why my brother could go into these certain places, but I could not. For many years this memory shaped my idea of seminary and, consequently, of ministry. My discovery of the Mennonites and the realization that we are a priesthood of all believers, each ministering in his or her way, has helped to change and enlarge upon my ideas of what seminary and ministry can be.—*Ann Marchand in The Window (Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries) October 1980.*

possible. Where I am today came through little steps such as (1) taking active part in church work opportunities like Sunday school teaching and Bible study leadership. These experiences made me want to become more knowledgeable and skilled in biblical interpretation and areas of church work. (2) I decided to go to seminary for my own growth despite the fact I saw no way it would provide a career with financial compensation. I remember telling my adviser, "I'm a woman and a Mennonite. There are only four Mennonite churches in this area and I do not know of any woman being hired for any job except secretary or janitor." However, seminary seemed right for me as a person. That was where my interest was and so I did what seemed right at that time, despite the fact that I could see no plan of where it might lead. (3) In my last year of seminary, the First Mennonite Church in Denver needed an interim pastor. Someone suggested my name. I am thankful for that person who did what might be considered a small thing—just mentioned a name; yet it started a process going. (4) When some of the members of Arvada Mennonite Church, where we are members, heard that I was considering a pastoral job, they decided to call a meeting and discuss the possibility of my doing a pastoral internship there. This is another factor in my becoming a pastor—my own church encouraged it and gave me the opportunity to test it. (5) After one year as a pastoral intern, the congregation voted to have me stay on as half-time co-pastor with Peter Ediger who would also serve half-time as co-pastor. (6) Another reason I am in the pastorate and have stayed there for six years is that Peter was secure enough in his own personhood and mature enough in spirituality that he was open and willing to share the pastoral ministry with me on an equal basis. He made it possible for me to feel like a true co-pastor in deed as well as name.

I am thankful to God for the people who have helped open the way for my career. It continues to be challenging, tiring, frustrating, very growthful, rewarding, and fulfilling.

## A grass-roots movement that grew and bore fruit

### The Church Will Never Be the Same

by Mary Schertz

"But do you really think that what happened at Bowling Green (Ohio) is going to help women get jobs as pastors in the Mennonite Church?"

When I returned from Bowling Green and began talking to people about the women's response to the study document on Leadership and Authority, which was part of the business brought before the delegates at the General Assembly of the Mennonite Church, I heard this question in varying forms and with varying degrees of skepticism. And I don't know the answer. Given the character of the Mennonite Church structure, given the character of the women's struggle within the Mennonite Church, I can conceive the possibility that absolutely no tangible, actual change will take place as a direct result of our efforts at Bowling Green. I can also conceive, and do hope, that what happened at Bowling Green is the dawn of a new day for the women of the Mennonite Church. But whatever changes do or do not result from that week, I count our efforts worthy. I make that statement without reservation because I know what being a part of the process has meant to me. To see and be part of women being affective upon the male system by valuing and using female ways of being has contributed immeasurably to my joy in being a woman.

Dorothy Yoder Nyce and I were on our way back from the Women and Ministry Conference held in Newton, Kansas, in March when we first expressed to each other the need we felt to work with women in a serious and scholarly way on some of the issues we are facing as Mennonite Church women. Ruth Krall shaped and focused that dream when she suggested that women gather to work on the Leadership and Authority document scheduled for a delegate vote at Assembly in August. The ten women gathered in July to address the document represented a variety of educational and experiential backgrounds. We shared a deep and honest concern for the women of the Mennonite Church.

In the evening and day that we spent together, we discussed the issues of the document with discipline, courage, and vigor. We explored the areas of discomfort we felt toward the study. We struggled toward new understandings, teaching each other as we went. But important as the cognitive process was, the process of igniting the fires of female friendship was even more important. Women have had too little experience in trusting and valuing their own perceptions. We worked hard to build the necessary trust.

We left the meeting with a sense of commitment to each other and to the action we wanted to take. We wanted to be effective at Bowling Green, but we also knew that, whether or not we were effective, the time had come to be active. We could no longer be passive.

In terms of specifics, we (now calling ourselves the Ad Hoc Group on Women in Church Leadership) drafted a memo and sent it to the delegates to the Mennonite Church General Assembly, 1981 and to the members of the General Board. This memo, written by Diane McDonald in consultation with the group, outlined our

critique of the document in three areas: conclusion, political process, and theological method. The memo also announced a meeting of interested women to be held the first morning of the Assembly at Bowling Green. In addition to announcing the meeting in the memo, we printed notices to be posted in all the women's restrooms at Bowling Green. We also planned to provide newsprint for the comments of women who could not or did not wish to attend the morning meeting.

The shape of the morning meeting was not clear to us until Tuesday evening when some of us had arrived at Bowling Green. At that point, we discerned that our memo and the posting of the notices had aroused more anxiety than we had anticipated. We decided that instead of discussing the document itself or strategizing as to how we would present our issues to the delegate body, we would focus on women's experience. In so doing, we also saw ourselves squarely within the Anabaptist tradition of giving and receiving counsel.

Two hundred women attended the meeting on Wednesday morning. Women of all ages and from all sorts of backgrounds came. After an introductory comment by Anna Bowman and Diane McDonald's invitation to accept "responsibility for full equality in our communities by naming and addressing our fears as well as our joys. Alice Roth opened the meeting for women to express their feelings about their lives as Mennonite Church women. The feelings that women shared with each other in this setting varied from the real joy in church leadership that some women are experiencing to the deep pain that others know. Some women are finding a wealth of opportunity to minister and to be ministered unto by women. Many of these situations are smaller congregations of the house fellowship type. Other women are experiencing limitation and the pain of that limitation. One woman said that she had many opportunities to speak but the conference refuses to license her because her husband is not licensed. Another woman said that she felt more "subtle opposition" from women than from men. She commented that some women seem to feel threatened by women ministers and to feel more comfortable with a "man in the pulpit." Another woman expressed, movingly, that co-pastoring a church with a husband can be "hard work all the way," that the "struggle itself is a gift."

Each woman brought her own perspective. One pointed out that what we do here in North America has a ripple effect felt elsewhere in the world: some African women have said that they were more free and more respected before they became Christians. Another said that though she herself has no desire to pastor a congregation, she feels a need to be ministered to by women. A woman, she said, brings a dimension to the interpretation of Scripture that no man can. Another expressed a hunger for women as examples and mentors.

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## Response to the Equal Rights Amendment

by Linda Yoder

In an attempt to facilitate discussion of the Equal Rights Amendment, the MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society requested this personal response.

Tonight I am in China. I am here to teach English and have met my classes today for the first time. In each of the classes, during the first twenty minutes or so, someone asked a question concerning the situation of women in the United States. I have no choice but to tell them that, unlike the Chinese, our constitution does not guarantee equal rights to women under the law. It will not be easy to admit that.

I work and hope for the ERA's passage because I find it painful to explain to people of other countries and to my own children that our constitution, that same constitution that I learned as a child was the ultimate document of democracy, does not guarantee equal rights to women. Rights to all religions, yes; rights to all races, yes. But not to both sexes.

I work and hope for the ERA, not because I expect to have great personal benefit from it, but for the sake of my sisters, older sisters whom I have seen suffer from unfair assumptions about property ownership when they became widows, younger sisters whose dissolved marriages have left them powerless in an economic structure stacked against them.

I work and hope for the ERA because the rights that women have won during the past few years are so tenuous, so vulnerable to the whims of opportunistic lawmakers. We have been seeing recently how economic conditions can affect the national commitment to justice for all people, a reminder of how easily rights can be lost if not guaranteed by the constitution.

I work and hope for the ERA because I have faith in the family. I believe that assuring equal rights and responsibilities to women can ultimately strengthen an institution that is to be entered by choice and to be continued through commitment of equal persons to one another.

I work and hope for the ERA because "to do justice" is biblical. Equality and mutuality of men and women is a concept developed in the New Testament. Jesus repeatedly affirmed the full humanity and responsibility of women in his relationships. Theologian Leonard Swidler says, "Jesus was a feminist, that is, a person who promotes the equality of women with men, who treats women primarily as human persons and willingly contravenes social custom in so acting."

### What does this controversial amendment actually require?

Section 1. Equality of rights under law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

*That's all* It does not guarantee that attitudes will change, that women will never be demeaned or harassed that all women will be able to get the job of their choice, that parents will provide equal learning experiences for boys and girls, that women will not choose husbands merely for their ability to provide a life on easy street. The Constitution simply has no power to change attitudes nor force people into ways of living that they do not choose.

How can we know that this constitutional amendment would neither have the horrible consequences that its opponents have predicted, nor bring about the utopia some eager advocates seem to expect? For one thing, we can look at the sixteen states who have added equal rights provisions to their state constitutions. That might allay fears of unforeseen results and perhaps dash hopes for sweeping changes.

Actually, the amendment wouldn't go into effect until two years after ratification. This time would permit the states and the nation to review their statutes and get rid of those that discriminate by sex, such as the Alabama law that allows boys to become newspaper carriers at 10, but girls not until 17, or the property laws in many states that discriminate against wives who are homemakers.

### What is the current status of the ERA?

When three-fourths of the state legislatures (38) have ratified the amendment, it will become a part of the U.S. Constitution. Thirty-five state legislatures, representing an overwhelming majority of the U.S. population, have ratified already. In 1979, Congress extended the deadline for ratification to 30 June 1982.

Supporters of the ERA are trying to carry out a last minute campaign to educate the public about what the amendment actually means. But catching up with downright lies is a never-ending proposition. In Florida, for example, flyers proclaiming that the ERA would deny a homemaker social security benefits were widely distributed. Quite the opposite is true: in fact, it would also protect the rights of widowers.

### What can the ERA accomplish and what can it not accomplish?

1) Labor laws protecting health and safety of women workers would be extended to men.

2) Social Security benefits would be equalized.

3) Laws restricting the rights of wives to establish businesses, become guarantors, or enter into contracts would be invalidated.

4) Criminal laws providing for harsher penalties for one sex than the other would be nullified. However, protection by law against crimes against the person such as rape and sexual abuse would be extended to males.

5) Abortion laws would *not* be affected because the

(over)

States which have not ratified the ERA: Oklahoma, Illinois, Missouri, Virginia, Florida, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina

amendment would deal *only* with how such a law would apply to men—an impossible situation.

6) Child support and alimony would *not* be denied to women under the ERA. Both parents will not be required to contribute the same amount of financial aid, but both would have to take on proportional responsibilities, either in services or money.

7) Rights of privacy would *not* be affected. These rights (recognized by the U. S. Supreme Court in 1965) would protect the right to segregated sleeping quarters in colleges, prisons, and military barracks.

What the ERA could and could not do is becoming clearer than it was when ratification efforts began. The story of Frances, a mother in Philadelphia, illustrates what may be happening. Frances, busy caring for her three small children at home with the support of her husband's \$19,000 yearly salary, was not at all interested in the women's movement. Then the couple was divorced. Frances won custody of the children, but the court proclaimed that the state equal rights provision required mothers to be responsible to pay their children's expenses, and so awarded her only \$75 a week to take care of them.

However, in a significant decision, a Pennsylvania appeals court reversed the decision, holding that the mother's at-home care of the children was just as important as money, and required the father to support the children fully. This decision is crucial because it provides a clue as to what will happen—in legal terms—to the traditional homemaker role. Common Cause researchers say, "ERA will serve to strengthen the family." The wage earner will still be responsible for support, but if both earn money, each is responsible according to his or her capabilities. "As non-monetary responsibilities and services are included as major sources for support and custody allocation, the homemaker's position would be legally viewed as an important facet of our social and economic stability."

Besides the question of a couple's right to choose traditional roles, Mennonite women I hear also rightly wonder whether the ERA—which would mean that should there ever be a draft, one sex cannot be exempt—might not increase the power of the Pentagon over people's lives. This is an issue that cannot lightly be dismissed. I do not want to see a single 18-year old

woman sent to war. But I have an equal horror of seeing an 18-year old man do the same. I believe that if the ERA is ratified, more men, women and families will be re-thinking issues of war, peace, and the influence of militarism on our times. Could that all be bad?

#### Who Supports the ERA?

Finally, I strongly urge that persons undecided about the amendment or opposed to it take a careful look at those groups who are vociferous against it: go behind the rhetoric to analyze precisely *why* they oppose it. There are clues that point to economic reasons for some groups' opposition. A study analyzing the elected leaders who defeated ratification in certain southern states discovered that the key persons in the defeat were closely linked to the insurance industry, an industry which fears that equal treatment might prove costly to them. (New York Times, 29 May 1978). Groups who have gone on the record opposing the ERA include the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Communist Party, the John Birch Society, the Ku Klux Klan, the Liberty Lobby.

On the other hand, until Reagan's administration, all American presidents have supported the amendment. Among those groups who have issued statements in support are: American Nurses Association, Church Women United, Common Cause, Ecumenical Task Force on Women and Religion, League of Women Voters, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Board of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, National Coalition of American Nuns, National Council of Jewish Women, United Presbyterian Church, Women's Christian Temperance Union, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Young Women's Christian Association.

Some sources of information are: ERA Support Project (of the United Methodist Church) 100 Maryland Avenue N. E., Washington, D. C. 20002; Common Cause, 2030 M. Street N. W. Washington, D. C. 20044 (phone 202/833-1200); League of Women Voters, 1730 M. St. N. W., Washington, D. C. 20036; NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, 132 West 43rd. St., New York, New York 10036.

*Linda Yoder, Morgantown, West Virginia, has been associate director of a Center for Women at Briar Cliff College, Sioux City, Iowa, and chairwoman of the Women's Information Center of Morgantown, WV. She and her husband were Mennonite Central Committee volunteers in Indonesia for six years. It was through Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, that she recently taught in China's Northeast Institute of Technology.*

## The Church Will Never Be the Same

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A recurring theme of the morning's conversation was the question of change. Some of the women expressed gratitude and appreciation for the ways the church has changed. One said that in her congregation in 1936 a woman missionary could give her testimony if she "stood in her place." She contrasted that limitation with the election of a woman to serve as an elder in the leadership team of the same congregation last year. Other women recalled, in a similar vein, that "ten years ago we couldn't do...but now we are permitted to..."

One woman noted that not only is the "old guard" reluctant to change but many of the younger people as well.

Some urged caution and gentleness in change. One said that one gets a chicken by hatching it, not by smashing the egg. Another hoped that women would not lose their traditional femininity. And another testified to the "mighty inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit" in the face of the question "how long are we going to have to wait?"

Women expressed both appreciation to and frustration about the process initiated by the Ad Hoc Group on Women in Church Leadership. One woman commented that "the joke's on me!" She said she had always despised women's meetings, being more interested in the church business meetings even though she was often the only woman attending besides the women

from "the field." She thought the fact that women could gather and talk about something besides quilts was "fantastic." Another woman said she was impatient with having to call a women's meeting. She wished to get on with "the business of being a person." Another woman expressed sorrow that we are "at a place where we can't talk freely to men."

At the end of an hour more than twenty-five different women had spoken. No one person, group, or opinion dominated. As important as what was actually said was the sense of women really hearing each other. That we are not all of one mind was not only tolerated but valued.

That women were free to be their unique selves had an effect that was not limited to this event. In the delegate sessions later in the week, on the newsprint provided in the restrooms, with each other and with men, women were talking. We found that simply being heard builds confidence and frees us to emerge with the strength and courage within us.

In the workshop conducted by the committee that developed the leadership document and in the delegate session in which the vote on the document was taken, the strength and courage of women created the space and time to state our concerns and ask our questions. The women of the Ad Hoc Group focused the attention of the workshop on the issues raised in the memo sent to the delegates and the General Board. Many other women and men spoke as well, most of the comments

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## Filled with holy light

by Marlene Kropf

From where I sat, it looked like this.

Our congregation, Portland (Ore.) Mennonite, had spent five Sunday mornings and evenings working our way through the *Leadership and Authority* study guide. Along the way we had received biblical teaching, examined our own attitudes toward change, compared our leadership patterns with those of New Testament times, and discussed the meaning of leadership and authority.

Sometimes we had disagreed with each other. At other times, we had merely quibbled over fine points. And then again we had agreed wholeheartedly with each other. Now we had come to resolve an old, unfinished question: in which ministries of our congregation could women serve?

For a long time we had known that we stood divided on this issue. Through the leadership and authority study, it became clear that differing views of Scripture interpretation could keep us paralyzed forever. So how could our congregation come to a mutually acceptable decision when honest differences ran so deep?

We decided to come together in silence one Sunday evening and listen together for the voice of God's Spirit among us. Candles had been lit around the room, and a fire blazed in the fireplace. Some folks sat on the floor on pillows; others sat in a circle of chairs. After we sang

a song of unity, we opened the Scriptures. One voice after another spoke or read a fitting passage. Then there was silence. A few questions came to guide our thoughts: What is the Spirit saying to me? How does this issue look from someone else's point of view? What direction is God leading us? Some people wrote their responses. Others simply sat quietly.

Then we were invited to tell what had happened during the silence. God had spoken of love and unity in faith. Strident speeches gave way to words of peace. Old barriers fell down. Some questions still rose. Casting aside centuries of tradition was frightening, painful. Could we trust the blessed Spirit to lead us, teach us further?

The momentum of decision was toward change. Still a few held back. More words of counsel passed between brothers and sisters. My heart went out to the questioners who still clung to the old ways, who longed to be faithful too. Then carefully, slowly, agreement came: in our congregation women may serve in any and all ministries to which they are called. From where I sat, the room was filled with a holy light. Had I actually lived to see the breaking of this new day? My cup was full to overflowing. Now is the kingdom! Now is the glory of our Lord come among us! Thanks be to God.—*Gospel Herald, 21 April 1981, used by permission.*

addressing the issues of women in church leadership. Toward the end of that meeting, Marlin Miller proposed that one way to process the concerns of the Ad Hoc Group and the concerns of the study document would be to pass the document with a provision for further study of the issues of women in church leadership by women as advocated in the memo sent to the delegates and General Board. That compromise seemed wise to us since we perceived the most urgent needs to be money and opportunity for women to take ownership and to process these issues. The goal of the Ad Hoc Group was not to change church polity in the General Assembly, 1981. We did not come with a vision which we wanted to implement. We came determined to create a space and time from which women could emerge with such a vision. We could and did, being women, dance with the politics of the situation without losing the pulse of what we were about.

On Thursday afternoon at the business session, the women of the Ad Hoc Group and many other women and men spoke in favor of passing the document with provision for further study. With a minimum of questioning these motions carried.

## news and verbs

**Helen Martens**, associate professor of music at Conrad Grebel College, terminated her directorship of the Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir in June after fourteen continuous years.

**Wanda McDowell**, Bluffton College Nursing Department Chair, was part of a delegation to the People's Republic of China last spring. Sponsored by the People-to-People Citizen Ambassador Program, the trip was to observe and evaluate Chinese health care delivery systems.

## Jobs that Need Doing

(A new column that welcomes your suggestions.)

Elaine Sommers Rich writes: I am keenly aware of the much research that needs to be done about Mennonite women. May I suggest two who are still living:

**Lena Waltner**, artist, born 1895, living in Mennonite Home at Freeman, South Dakota:

**Luella Graber Regier**, pioneer in education of the developmentally disabled, living at 210 W. 26th St., North Newton, Kansas, 67117.

May I also suggest some who are deceased:

**Bertha Kinsinger Petter** (1872-1967), missionary to the Cheyenne nation:

**Amelia ("Tanta Melie") Hamm Mosiman**, with her husband S.K. deeply committed to the cause of education. (She was from Nebraska):

the **Von Riesen sister**—Selma Linscheid (still living) who did much for Mennonite Central Committee. Helene Goerz who set up the Bethel College Church library, and Katharina Loewen.

Whether these actions by the delegate body at Bowling Green guide the church toward justice for the female half of its members depends on the strength and courage of the new committee and upon the grace of the delegate body which acts upon the committee's work. But whatever the results may be, the efforts of the Ad Hoc Group were worthwhile: the General Assembly witnessed women's process. The church will never be the same! Women valuing themselves and each other. Women speaking and hearing what other women say. Women working together, supporting each other, caring for each other. Women thinking and debating. The fact is that women were effective in changing the direction of the corporate body. Let's celebrate.

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*Mary Schertz is a midwife at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana. She says, "I have interests in peace, children's literature, the biblical languages, counseling, and all issues that being a woman in today's church and society raises for me."*

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Mennonite Central Committee has produced a color filmstrip called "Women in Development: The Neglected Key." Together with cassette narration and study guide, this explores problems and potential of Third World Women. It is available for free rental from MCC U.S. and MCC Canada headquarters, and from regional and provincial offices. For more information, write MCC Audio-Visuals, 21 South 12th St., Akron, PA 17501.

Twenty-eight women responded to the following questions to comprise the July-August MCC Peace Section Newsletter, coordinated by **Marian Landis**: Describe your personal peace pilgrimage. What people and experiences have been influential? How are you presently living out your beliefs about peace? According to your experience, how does competition influence the ability to resolve conflict nonviolently? How does your experience of male and female roles effect your perception of issues of justice and peace? What do you teach your children about conflict? What are some of your principles or assumptions about conflict management in your family and neighborhood? How do you see your children's school experiences influencing their attitudes toward social justice and nonviolence? How do you teach your children an awareness and appropriate responses to peace and justice issues with national and international dimensions? How do you help children handle messages of violence they receive from peer groups and the media (TV)? How do your children feel about the threat of nuclear warfare? How do you cope with the possibility of nuclear holocaust in their future?

If you would like a copy, write to Ron Flickinger, MCC Peace Section, 21 South 12th St., Akron, PA 17501.

**Nancy Kerr Williams** has accepted a half-time position as project coordinator of the PEACE Team Project, a con-joint resource for campus ministry developed by the Mennonite Church's Student and Young Adult Services (SYAS), the General Conference's Department of Higher Education (DHE), and Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Peace Section. She will stimulate, encourage, evaluate, and provide resources for peace ministries on campuses in urban settings.

**Dorothy Yoder Nyce** is teaching "Women/Men: History and Vision" at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries and participating in a colloquium entitled "Women and Men Ministering."

**Irene L. Bishop, Edna Ruth Byler, Susie Rutt, Elfrieda Klassen Dyck, Clara Schmidt, and Olga Reimer Martens** are documented in a soon-to-be-released Volume 4 of the Mennonite Central Committee story *Something Meaningful for God*.

In 1980, 809 people served with MCC. Of these 436 were women.

**Carol Claussen and Eleanor R. Nickel** are newly re-elected members of the board of directors of Bethel Deaconess Hospital Association, Newton, Kansas. The meditation at that business meeting was preached by **Marilyn Klaus** of Newton.

Women can be excluded from the draft, according to a June U.S. Supreme Court decision. Warns Delton Franz of MCC U.S. Peace Section: "By having deferred so completely to the judgment of Congress on what is constitutional in military matters, the court has come close to giving Congress a blank check in future draft laws.

**Mary and Peter Sprunger-Froese**, Colorado Springs, CO, will speak at a Peace Assembly to be convened by MCC U.S. Peace Section November 20 and 21 at East Swamp Mennonite Church, Quakertown, PA. **Helen Caldicott**, president of Physicians for Social Responsibility will speak on "The Risk and Consequences of Nuclear War."

**Margaret Sanger and Sojourner Truth**, women's rights advocates, have been inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, N.Y. Sanger was one of the first outspoken advocates for birth control and spent time in prison for publicizing her cause. She lived from 1883 to 1966. Sojourner Truth was a popular and colorful speaker who crusaded for the dignity of blacks and women; she died in 1883.

Thirty-two women delegates attended the Mennonite World Council General Council in Nairobi, Kenya, in June. Total number of women attending was 54, out of an attendance of 136. Women delegates were not given voting privileges, but participated in all other aspects of the meetings. They presented two of the four Bible studies and gave several of the major addresses. The

Sunday worship service was led by a husband/wife team, and women assisted in serving communion. They requested that MWC include women speakers for the major addresses at the eleventh assembly (to be held in Strasbourg, France, in 1984) schedule no more than one special women's meeting, and give more involvement to women in the communion service. (not only distributing the elements). The findings committee, on behalf of the General Council, reported that "we affirm the broader inclusion of women." There is concern, however, that only five of the eighty-six General Council members are women. —from a report by Rosalyn Myers Kniss

**Laura Loewen**, Winnipeg, Manitoba, is the new country representative for Mennonite Central Committee in Zambia. (Sixteen per cent of MCC's country representatives are women.)

**Meribeth Sprunger**, Newton, Kansas, is the new secretary of mission communication (formerly director of mission services) of the General Conference Mennonite Church's Commission of Overseas Mission. She succeeds **Tina Block Ediger** who worked for the commission for the past twenty-six years.

**Emma Richards**, co-pastor of Lombard (Illinois) Mennonite Church, was the commencement speaker at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana, when (last spring) thirty-nine graduates received degrees.

**Maria dos Prazeres** coordinates the new physical therapy center in the Mustardinha neighborhood of Recife, Brazil. The idea of a model physical therapy center, opened April 1981, was conceived by **Greet Lodder**, MCC volunteer from Holland.

**Miriam Rich** (North Newton, Kansas) and **Shari Miller** (Uniondale, Indiana) have helped the Choctaw Indian community of Clifton, Louisiana, secure a Louisiana Department of Arts Loan which is being used for craft workshops, materials, and an inventory of crafts—in short, helping the Clifton Choctaw appreciate who they are.

**Joyce M. Shutt** and **Norman Schmidt** performed a wedding together at East Swamp Mennonite Church in Pennsylvania last June.

"Women as Prophetic Witnesses: Visions of Reform and Renewal" is a lecture series by four Roman Catholic theologians—Doris Donnelly, Rosemary Haughton, Monika Hellwig, and Theresa Kane. For cassette tapes of the four addresses, send \$16.95 to The Tablet, Box 155, Brooklyn, NY 12243.

**Janet Reedy**, Elkhart, Indiana, is a World Peace Tax Fund coordinator. Persons interested in more information on the WPTF may contact the National Office, WPTF, 2111 Florida Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20008.

## Letter

### A "Prison Epistle"

(5 August)

Many thanks to all who have sent letters, cards, thoughts, prayers. I've been blessed by the strong ties of community. Having a wide support community contrasts starkly with the lives of most prisoners. In Amarillo (Texas) many women in jail never got a letter—many had no visitors. They came from the streets, from broken homes, and they return to repeat the cycle. Here in Fort Worth with "white collar criminals," prisoners from harsh economic situations are rarer. But family ties are strained for many; church support comes in the form of "imported" services. When the Dallas Mennos bought my husband Peter a ticket to come see me, many expressed pleasant shock that a church would do such a thing. Religious services emphasize an individualistic piety and offer psychological solace for all who accept their prisoner status and God's will. One doesn't hear sermons on liberty to the captives!

I hate to see inmates succumb to social pressures as they pair off "to pass the time" in this coed "country club of federal prisons." I remain a riddle—having several good friends who are men, yet doggedly devoted to an absent husband. Most here can't believe I'd bet my life on Peter's faithfulness. It seems the strength of covenant and grace sufficient for one's struggles are not believeale to even confessing Christians.

A Vietnam veteran is here for importing heroin; his habit steadied and steeled him in completing bombing raids. The memories of headless women and screaming children, the guilt and loss of ten crucial years haunt him. A Catholic, he was refused conscientious objector status when drafted. Why must the war continue to exact its toll, simply because his church background and black skin were not privileged? When will we recognize the cost of war to its "survivors"?

This week we remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki. God grant us ears to hear the Japanese survivors, hearts open to Spirit-promptings, feet eager to venture.

Maybe if more of us wind up behind bars, we'll be able to incarnate to prisoners (and guards) a taste of the community from which we come. Then the visits of the Dallas Mennos, the fidelity of a marriage across distance will not indicate an unusual church nor a personality quirk, but will be part of a corporate witness to the salt of the Kingdom, the sustenance of encompassing love.

P.S. (19 August) The Dallas Mennos are all coming to visit tomorrow night, for a send-off supper. Do I feel blessed! And thankfully, the pastor came to visit my Mexican friend last night. (Ernst Harder spent many years in S. America, so he doesn't have the Spanish blockage I have!) And a medical doctor in their group wants to phone in again to advocate for Hector who needs an eye operation. These folks have picked up on some ministry that I can't do from in here. It feels good to make connections...I'll be home soon!—Mary Sprunger-Froese, Fort Worth, Texas. (Sentenced for entering and praying inside the fence of Pantex weapons plant, Amarillo, Texas. Letter written by invitation of the editor.)

## Looking Ahead

Forthcoming Reports will focus on:

Singleness and Single Parenting, November-December 1981, Bertha Beachy coordinator.

Women/Health/Sexuality, January-February 1982, Rosie Epp, coordinator.

Language, March-April 1982, Muriel Thiessen Stackley, coordinator.

Ordination, May-June 1982, Martha Smith Good, coordinator.

The Report is a bi-monthly publication of the MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society. Correspondence should be sent to Editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 4830 Woodland, Lincoln, NE 68516.

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